

SENATE RECORD VOTE ANALYSIS

105th Congress
2nd Session

Vote No. 64

April 2, 1998, 10:41 am
Page S-3035 Temp. Record

BUDGET RESOLUTION/Debt-Free in 30 Years

SUBJECT: Senate Concurrent Budget Resolution for fiscal years 1999-2003 . . . S.Con. Res. 86. Domenici motion to waive the Budget Act for the consideration of the Allard amendment No. 2170.

ACTION: MOTION REJECTED, 53-45

SYNOPSIS: As reported, S.Con. Res. 86, the Senate Concurrent Budget Resolution for fiscal years 1999-2003, will balance the unified budget in 1998 and will run surpluses for each of the next 5 fiscal years. Both Federal spending and Federal revenues will increase 3.5 percent from fiscal year (FY) 1998 to FY 1999. All surpluses will be reserved for Social Security reform. A reserve fund will be established to allow the entire Federal share of revenues resulting from a potential tobacco settlement to be dedicated to bolstering Medicare's solvency.

The Allard amendment would make it out of order to consider any budget resolution, amendment thereto, or conference report thereon that would cause budgeted outlays for that fiscal year to exceed budgeted revenues or that did not provide that actual revenues would exceed actual outlays by an amount required to amortize the entire Federal debt over 30 years in order to eliminate it entirely by the end of fiscal year 2028. This prohibition could only be waived for a fiscal year in which a declaration of war was in effect. Additionally, the amendment would provide that no bill to increase revenues would be deemed to have passed the Senate unless it had been approved by a majority of the total membership of each House of Congress by a rollcall vote.

Debate on a first-degree amendment to a budget resolution is limited to 2 hours. Debate was further limited by unanimous consent. After debate, Senator Lautenberg raised a point of order that the amendment violated section 305(b)(2) of the Budget Act. Senator Domenici then moved to waive the Budget Act for the consideration of the amendment. Generally, those favoring the motion to waive favored the amendment; those opposing the motion to waive opposed the amendment.

NOTE: A three-fifths majority (60) vote is required to waive the Budget Act. After the vote, the point of order was upheld and the amendment thus fell.

(See other side)

YEAS (53)			NAYS (45)			NOT VOTING (2)	
Republicans (50 or 93%)	Democrats (3 or 7%)		Republicans (4 or 7%)	Democrats (41 or 93%)		Republicans (1)	Democrats (1)
Allard	Hutchison	Feingold	Abraham	Akaka	Inouye	Helms- ^{2AY}	Landrieu- ^{2AN}
Ashcroft	Inhofe	Lieberman	Bond	Baucus	Johnson		
Bennett	Jeffords	Wyden	Hagel	Biden	Kennedy		
Brownback	Kempthorne		Santorum	Bingaman	Kerry		
Burns	Kyl			Boxer	Kerry		
Campbell	Lott			Breaux	Kohl		
Chafee	Lugar			Bryan	Lautenberg		
Coats	Mack			Bumpers	Leahy		
Cochran	McCain			Byrd	Levin		
Collins	McConnell			Cleland	Mikulski		
Coverdell	Murkowski			Conrad	Moseley-Braun		
Craig	Nickles			Daschle	Moynihan		
D'Amato	Roberts			Dodd	Murray		
DeWine	Roth			Dorgan	Reed		
Domenici	Sessions			Durbin	Reid		
Enzi	Shelby			Feinstein	Robb		
Faircloth	Smith, Bob			Ford	Rockefeller		
Frist	Smith, Gordon			Glenn	Sarbanes		
Gorton	Snowe			Graham	Torricelli		
Gramm	Specter			Harkin	Wellstone		
Grams	Stevens			Hollings			
Grassley	Thomas						
Gregg	Thompson						
Hatch	Thurmond						
Hutchinson	Warner						

EXPLANATION OF ABSENCE:

- 1—Official Business
- 2—Necessarily Absent
- 3—Illness
- 4—Other

SYMBOLS:

- AY—Announced Yea
- AN—Announced Nay
- PY—Paired Yea
- PN—Paired Nay

Those favoring the motion to waive contended:

We have balanced the budget, but we still have a \$5.6 trillion debt, and if reforms are not made to fix the actuarial problems of Social Security and other entitlement programs those programs, and quite possibly the country, will go bankrupt. Without reforms, Social Security will be officially insolvent by 2029, though we find it hard to see how we could make it even to that point because of the huge annual deficits and debt that would have piled up in the meantime. The Allard amendment offers an alternative. It would require Congress to pay off the existing \$5.6 trillion debt over the next 30 years. Though this requirement sounds draconian, it actually would be a fairly painless task because of the long timeframe. Over the first 5 years, the unified budget surpluses would be used to reduce the debt. For each of the next 25 years, annual budget surpluses of just \$11.7 billion, less than 1 percent of the total budget, would be required. By following this path, interest payments of some \$3.7 trillion would be saved. The savings, in a few years, would leave ample room for tax relief, which we favor, for enacting Social Security and Medicare reforms, which are increasingly favored by a bipartisan majority, or new spending, which many of our more liberal colleagues favor. As early as 2004, under this plan, it would be possible to reduce the debt and provide \$616 million for tax relief; by 2005, an extra \$2.1 billion would be available for tax relief, entitlement reforms, or new spending; each year thereafter the excess would continue to grow. As the United States reduced its demand for loans, capital would be freed up for the private sector, stimulating private investment, lowering interest rates, and causing the economy to grow even more rapidly. Most economists are predicting that the United States' economy will do well for the next several years. We urge our colleagues to use this window of opportunity to make sure that it will do well for decades to come. We urge them to support the Allard amendment.

Those opposing the motion to waive contended:

The Allard amendment would require the country to run budget surpluses in every year, good and bad, for the next 30 years. That requirement is dangerously rigid. We strongly believe in deficit spending during difficult economic times, both for the humanitarian purpose of helping people who suddenly find themselves in dire need and for the fiscal purpose of stimulating the economy to grow. Also, we note that those conservatives who believe strongly that the best way to make the economy grow is to enact tax cuts should oppose this amendment as well, because it would make it much harder to enact such cuts. Yet another problem is that it could prove harmful to national security. The only exception that it contains is for when a declaration of war is in effect. However, declarations of war have not been made for most of the military conflicts in which the United States has been involved. Under this amendment, in most circumstances in which our troops were fighting, Congress would be hampered in giving the needed support because of the budget surplus requirement. We are not opposed to eliminating the debt; we are just opposed to eliminating it by a rigid formula. The better way to proceed would be to fight out the budget, year by year, and to make decisions that fit the moment. Therefore, we urge our colleagues to oppose the Allard amendment.